



Management and Performance Associates – September 2010

How does that impact me?

What would happen if the president of your company were transferred to manage the business of a division in another part of the world? What if a director left the company and decided to start his own business? What if a direct report – the incumbent of a critical position – left the company to work for the competition? What if you decided on a 180 degree turn in your career and embarked on a new learning curve in an area completely different from your current one? What if...?

If the answers to these questions are “OK, there will be no impact for me” or “This has nothing to do with me” or “This is not my problem. That’s why we have Human Resources” or anything similar, you can stop reading right now and wait for next month’s newsletter. On the other hand, if you believe these answers are not appropriate, then invest the next few minutes to increase your vision of your role as a leader, to get some hints about leading your team in a more strategic way and to understand how your actions and decisions may impact the substitution of professionals, at different hierarchical levels.

To a great extent, the degree of success in an organization depends on the leadership quality that is present at all levels. As reality is not static, building and maintaining a team of effective leaders is similar to a relay race. Each runner, from his/her own position, determines the speed and rhythm of their performance, in a way that the team can win the race. Similarities with corporate life ends there, as only the relay race has a well defined start and end point. Corporate reality has its own dynamism. This makes fundamental that all parts are well-oiled, that each external challenge generates a prompt and positive response, bringing competitive advantages to the business and that the eventual departure of a runner – or leader – has the minimum possible impact, either due to a quick substitution or by maintaining an elevated standard of excellence.

What is the commonality between the tasks of a supervisor and a top executive? Both, as people

leaders, regardless of the floor where their offices are located, must have clear in their minds that one of their most noble and challenging responsibilities is to develop and retain talent. Not only achieve their goals for the year, but more importantly to liberate their team’s potential, preparing them for current and future relay races. Nurturing self-development is an important part of the universe of concerns of a strategic leader. This way, as the wheel of fortune turns on, the organization is qualified to continue with the race, without the turbulence normally seen when the baton is relayed.

How to do that?

1. Substitution x Succession

Many times we mix succession with substitution. Substitution plans are designed under the assumption that today’s demands and requirements will be the same in the future. When making that assumption we eliminate the dynamic component of reality. In fact, we are creating the conditions for failure – for the professionals involved and for the organization. Therefore, when you have an open position, be attentive to current and future job requirements, observe market and technology trends which may impact the way of performing the job today and in a not so far away future. Substitutions are short term approaches, filling an open position today. A succession mindset will find a solution to a specific problem while creating the basis for sustainable long term results. If you act this way when a succession process is started you will contribute to attracting professionals who will step into the race ready to win.

2) Vision and Development

As organizations are inserted in a global, changing, unpredictable, ambiguous and highly complex environment it is fundamental to be clear about what is needed in terms of leadership in order to promote the continuous learning and development



of professionals. Your role is to: Offer a vision of where we are going; Get your team's commitment to reach this goal; Offer feedback to adjust direction and reinforce differentiated behaviors and performance; Coach your team in a way to release individual potential and creativity.

3) Competencies + Beliefs + Time Allocation

People need to be positioned in the right place in order to bring the sustained results which are needed by the organization. These results will not be maximized if there is no clarity of individual roles, required skills, what needs to be valued, and how time should be allocated. Basing your judgment only on demonstrated skills or competencies is not enough. Beliefs that support development and the incorporation and application of these competencies are also needed to bring positive future results. If they are not present, results will suffer the first time an individual is under pressure. We would like to emphasize, again, that this is a leadership requirement for every leader – regardless of his/her position in the hierarchy. Therefore, you need to open up your agenda to be close to your team, understand what each one of them values and its impact on sustained results.

This month we invited Luciana Vicchino, Human Resources Director for Barclays Capital - Brazil, to share her experience on this topic. This is what she has to share with us:

When I started my career, I used to be frustrated realizing that the majority of the managers – regardless of their experience - had a huge difficulty in dealing with development and career management. Aren't they basic managerial attributes?

Today I see the issue differently. It now motivates me because there is a lot of work to be done in this field and Human Resources professionals have a lot to contribute to.

Performance appraisal systems are organized and needed to record historical data. They do not substitute the need for direct and personal monitoring. They only formalize the external process and although they help with the structure, they do not help the manager to think. My experience shows that being close to managers throughout the year is key to keep to issue afloat, to generate discussions, to help them to think it through and to transform development and career issues as part of their day to day. It makes managers more aware of the issues, as well as more comfortable dealing with them. This is support the planning process, not doing it for them. We have created discussion groups with the managers and results are starting to be fruitful.

See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.

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